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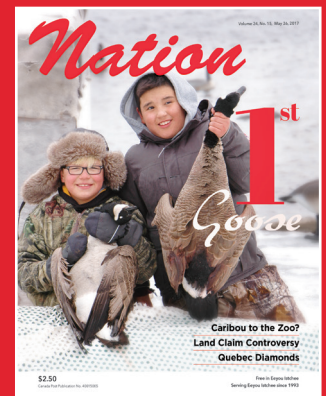
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Justin MacLeod (left) & Jarome Jolly (right)
Photo by Will Nicholls

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Political leadership

by Will Nicholls



Politicians have a hard path to walk at times. Just mentioning the word politician carries a negative vibe. Many of us don't see those in elected office as having integrity and accountability. However, they are necessary to any democracy as they play an important role in the well-being of a

Most people want a real leader and they are willing to live with someone less than perfect. You know why?

Because they have flaws too.

nation and its people. I have always been taught that someone who takes on the responsibility of leadership must honour this trust.

Accountability is crucial to effective political leadership. If a leader isn't accountable, then there will be no respect from the voters. A good political leader has to be honest and responsible for their own actions and decisions. That means communicating with all their constituents about the reasons for their decisions. They must also be willing to admit when they have made a mistake. They must represent the people rather than spending time "covering their backs" and criticizing others.

A good leader listens to the needs of the common people and represents

them faithfully. In other words, regardless of political party or opinion, they must work to achieve the greatest good for the general population. The most effective leaders do not use fear, intimidation or their title, but lead by building consensus around a common goal.

A leader must be sincere or, as I like to think of it, pure of heart and spirit. They seek to put the needs of others first and to be aware of that choice. Who wouldn't want to follow that ideal?

That doesn't mean they have to be perfect. After all they are a human beings doing a hard job of leading others. You have to come to terms with the fact that you have flaws. Most people want a real leader and they are willing to live with someone less than perfect. You know why? Because they have flaws too.

As with anyone they will feel the pressures of the job, make mistakes and are criticized for actions or decisions they have taken or not taken. As Cree we should make sure they are all right. It doesn't mean they are off the hook but



that we care. It is part of the Cree way-of-life, making sure everyone is okay as best we can.

Sometimes our leaders need that support and to know they are not alone. Just as we expect our leaders to have certain qualities, we should want those same qualities to be reflected in ourselves. If you think, as I do, that leaders are servants of the people then it is up to us to be leaders ourselves. It is also up to us to ensure the health and well-being of our servants as well as let them know what we expect of them.



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Stornoway unveils the first ever Quebec diamonds at Birks



by Amy German

Diamonds are forever

As the old song goes, diamonds are a girl's best friend, and Matt Manson's display of gems confirmed it. Diamonds are special because they are often used to express our love for one another, Manson told reporters at a press conference in Montreal May 11.

Manson is the President and CEO of Stornoway Diamond Corporation. He was full of pride as he presented the company's first 200 diamonds from the Renard Mine north of Mistissini at a special event co-hosted with Birks jewellers at their flagship store.

After 20 years of prep work, the diamond-mining project has finally reached the production stage. Thanks to the 2012 Mecheshoo Agreement, the last few years has witnessed Cree participation and partnerships. Hundreds of Crees worked on the construction of the road leading to the mine and at the mine site itself, resulting in an economic boom for the community of Mistissini.

As part of the Mecheshoo Agreement, the families whose traplines the mine is located on have been on a local committee and are involved in the decision-making process to ensure that the land is handled in a way that it can

be easily restored to its original state when the mining activity ceases.

"The families were involved in the process right from the beginning; it's been very important for them to know what has been happening on the territory," said Mistissini Chief Richard Shecapio, who was on hand to speak at the event.

"By getting them involved from day one, it allowed the families to communicate directly with the company so that they could stay informed and have a good understanding as to what would happen with the land and what [the company was] trying to accomplish," Shecapio said.

While fewer Crees are now involved with the mine compared to the construction phase, Shecapio said there are still many who will have career-long employment at the mine.

As for the diamonds themselves, "I am pretty sure that people from around the community will want a piece of that jewellery. I want one for my wife as well," said Shecapio.

During his speech, Manson stated, "We are honoured to be able to partner with Birks in the presentation of Quebec's first diamonds to the retail

market. It is fitting that these first beautiful, Quebec diamonds derived from Quebec's first diamond mine should premier for sale at Maison Birks, Quebec's most storied diamond jeweller. This evening's event marks another step in the long journey to bring the Renard Mine and Renard diamonds to the global market."

Manson told *the Nation* that the story of the Renard Mine and Stornoway is a terrific made-in-Quebec story.

"It has been 20 years from when the original exploration work set out to find diamonds, it has been millions of dollars and hundreds of people working and continuous activity over that time. It takes a very long time to get a diamond mine into production and so there is a huge amount of sweat equity that has been put into this vision of having this mine produce diamonds from Quebec."

At the event over 200 polished diamonds were unveiled to the public, including eight-carat gems priced at over \$600,000. The diamonds will tour Quebec and be displayed at various Birks' locations.





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MoCreebec dodges expulsion as NAN council and Moose Cree make moves in CNG land claim

by Joshua Grant

Controversy continues to brew over the Cree Nation Government's lawsuit seeking recognition of its claim to traditional rights over land west of the Ontario border. Now, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) council, formed of northern Ontario First Nations on the Treaty 9 territory in question, and the Moose Cree First Nation have filed to be listed in the CNG court case as a defendant and an intervenor respectively.

Adding to the drama was a rumour that MoCreebec First Nation was going to be expelled or voluntarily withdraw from NAN because of its ties to the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee. While a resolution to that effect was in fact tabled by Moose Cree Chief Patricia Faries at a NAN meeting on May 9, cooler heads prevailed in the end and MoCreebec has retained its seat, for now.

"It was a little bit premature," observed MoCreebec Chief Allan Jolly.

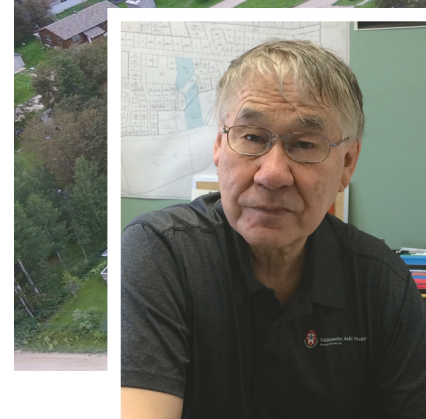
Jolly explained that resolutions to permit the coun-

cil to amend its bylaws and allow for the expulsion of members had to be voted on and passed before the resolution to expel MoCreebec could reach the table. He asked permission to express his views before the first resolution went to vote.

"They allowed me to speak and I presented MoCreebec's stance, objecting to the resolutions being proposed," he said. "After I was done it became clear that a lot of chiefs didn't like the idea of expelling anybody."

Jolly told *the Nation* that deliberation on the initial resolution continued for hours before a vote was taken. Once everyone had the opportunity to voice their concerns, the resolution did not garner enough support to be passed.

"They needed to get a support of 66%," he said. "In the end, they only got about 42%. The motion was defeated so that basically nullified the other two resolutions. That pretty well put an end to the matter for the time being."



MoCreebec Chief Allan Jolly

Jolly emphasized that he has great respect for all the chiefs at the table. "But I have an even deeper respect for some of them now," he said. "People had the courage to stand up for their personal beliefs. One Ojibway Chief even said, 'This goes against the way I think as an Anishinaabe.'"

Asked to speak to the sentiments of the Ontario First Nations opposed to the lawsuit, Jolly stressed the complexity of the issue and the unique impact it could have on the various parties in play.

"This is a very complex situation and it affects each of us differently. The general feeling seems to be anger. Moose Cree in particular are the ones right along the land

claim so they're the most affected by it. They look at it as the Cree coming to steal their land," he said.

"NAN is concerned about it from a Treaty 9 territory perspective. Since it's Treaty 9 area, they feel they're responsible to speak on behalf of everyone in that territory."

While Jolly says he excused himself from meetings specifically regarding the land claim, citing conflict of interest, he confirmed that the Moose Cree have filed to be entered into the CNG lawsuit as defendants while NAN has applied to be listed as intervenors. The hearings for both of these motions should happen in early June.

"Only then will we know exactly what the conditions

or parameters will be, and if they'll even be allowed in as defendants and intervenors," he said.

Jolly admitted that while MoCreebec is caught between a rock and a hard place, it does represent an opportunity for his community to finally receive official recognition from the Ontario and Canadian governments. He hopes to see a diplomatic resolution and willingness from the First Nations who feel their land is at stake to sit down with the CNG and discuss potential solutions.

"We're kind of caught right in the middle of this whole thing. In one sense, it's a good thing to bring things to a head. We want to go forward with the

idea of having a community with some connection to the JBNQA, and hopefully the land claim would create the environment where we could resolve our situation," said Jolly.

"We rarely see the political will to work together and change things; it takes things like this to force the issue – whether it's an out-of-court settlement or court proceedings running their course. I'm hopeful. I think something can be done and I'm hoping there'll be more openness to at least try and sit down and discuss this whole thing with the Cree and Taykwa Tagamou [Nation], Moose Cree and eventually NAN."

Caught in the middle

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Happy Birthday, Montreal!

Montreal City Hall hosted a lunch honouring Aboriginal people as part of its 375th anniversary celebrations May 17. Right off the bat the city recognized that Montreal was located on unceded First Nations land.

Clan mother Louise MacDonald from Akwesasne was invited to speak. She said she thought she was just “window dressing” for the event but had a few words she could share.

MacDonald said that while Canada treated their First Nations better than the United States, she was still not impressed. She said Canada had to

remember that the treaties were on a nation-to-nation basis and had to be honoured as such.

Meanwhile, Akwesasne Grand Chief Abram Benedict called for reconciliation and partnership that would benefit all peoples.

Other participants included Elder Kevin Deer (Kahnawake), Chief Christine Zachary-Deom (Kahnawake), Chief Ghislain Picard (AFNQL), Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre, Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard, Quebec Native Affairs Minister Geoffrey Kelley and federal Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly.



Lyle Cox named interim EEPF director

The Cree Nation Government and the Eeyou Eenou Police Force recently named Lyle Cox as interim director the EEPF, who will work out of the regional headquarters in Chisasibi.

According to Cox, two of his first priorities as interim director will be to improve communication between officers, lieutenants and captains as well as with the stakeholders in each community. He hopes to help make the EEPF more approachable, tackle the illicit drug trade and crack down on drug

trafficking both into and out of the Cree communities.

Here is a statement Cox submitted to the Nation:

First of all I'd like to express my sincere appreciation to the CNG who put their trust in me to serve as the Police Director on an interim basis. I am looking forward to serving the people of Eeyou Istchee and continuously improving the policing services we provide to our communities. Although the EEPF only started in 2011, we are a rapidly growing organization and we will continue to grow in the years to come. Every day we

will strive to improve the services we deliver through a community based policing model.

Internally we still have a lot to achieve and I'm confident that we are on the right track. Since its implementation we have been working on transforming the EEPF into a regional police force setting and we have come a long way in doing so. We are just now seeing our systems coming together, making the job of a police officer in the field much more efficient so we can concentrate on providing the best service we can.

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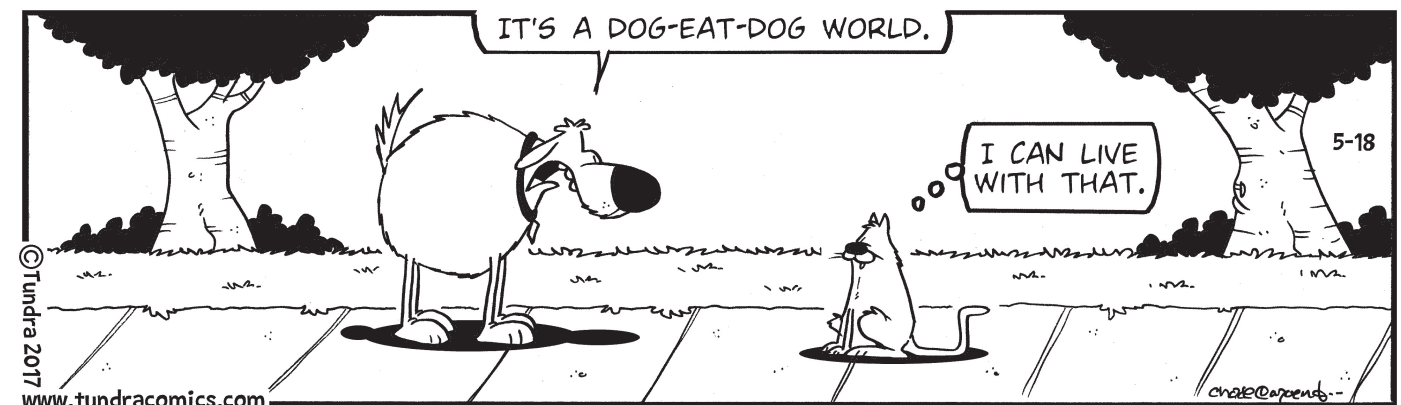


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by Dan Isaac
Photos by Sylvain Paquin

ZOO SOLUTION?

Despite conservation efforts by the Algonquin Nation and environmentalists, the Quebec Forest, Wildlife, and Parks Minister Luc Blanchette has decided to relocate a herd of boreal woodland caribou in the Val-d'Or region to the Saint-Félicien zoo.

Blanchette told the CBC he thought the effort to save the herd would be “exceptional.” But the April 20 decision was met with swift opposition from environmental groups, the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, MP Romeo Saganash, and the Cree Nation Government.

The plan is slated to be implemented this coming winter and would see the 15 remaining caribou in the herd chased by helicopter onto a frozen lake and captured one by one before being trucked away to the zoo.

While the herd's dwindling numbers are alarming, critics say this conservation effort doesn't address the real problem. Loss of habitat has been identified as the biggest threat to the species. Moving the herd to a zoo does little to mitigate the human impacts responsible for the drastic decline in the woodland caribou population.

If this becomes the norm for addressing loss of habitat, "there won't be enough zoos," said Alain Branchaud, executive director for the Quebec branch of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

Oddly, Quebec's decision came a day after the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society told federal Environment Minister Catherine McKenna they would be suing her ministry over the same issue. Their suit will argue that Canada failed to properly implement the Species at Risk Act in regards to the remaining 34,000 boreal woodland caribou in Canada.

"The Quebec government has a responsibility to protect endangered species and have recovery plans in place that address the protection of habitat," said Nadia Saganash, Wildlife Management Administrator

The plan is slated to be implemented this coming winter and would see the **15 remaining caribou** in the herd chased by helicopter onto a frozen lake and captured one by one before being trucked away to the zoo





for the Cree Nation Government. “But instead of increasing habitat recovery, the minister chose to put the Val-d’Or herd in captivity for the rest of their lives. This has no ecological value and is certainly not an acceptable conservation measure.”

And while the herd of caribou in question isn’t in Cree territory, the decision sets a troubling precedent. “The government had a duty to consult with the Algonquin,” Saganash told *the Nation*. “The lack of transparency and failure to consult should be concerning to all First Nations.”

There may also be ethical concerns. In a mysterious 2015 incident, 19 of the then-21 caribou at the Saint-Félicien zoo died. After the loss of their herd, the zoo asked the CNG’s Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Coordinating Committee (HFTCC) to capture migratory caribou in Eeyou Istchee. The HFTCC – a joint committee whose members are appointed by Ottawa, Quebec, the Inuit and the Cree – declined the zoo’s request. That decision forced the zoo to look elsewhere to replace the herd.

“This is what happens when an economist is a minister in charge of wildlife management,” said Saganash. “The zoo is struggling because they lost their caribou herd, and then there’s industry that wants to build roads in the habi-

*“The lack of transparency and failure to consult should be **concerning to all First Nations**”*

- Nadia Saganash



ECN EXCHANGE

What does Eeyou Communications do?

ECN is a fiber-optic telecom network that serves Eeyou Istchee. It provides ultra high- bandwidth tele-commu-
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Now, ECN has even more capacity to serve all the people
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ECN is a cost-sharing service. It works hard to not make a
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 and its components. Currently, the main users of the ECN

network are the Cree School Board, the Cree Health Board,
 the Chisasibi cable provider and the Councils. In the
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Is ECN a virtual or a real Cree business?

ECN is very real. It was set up by the Grand Council as a
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 and the initial construction was completed in 2011. Earlier

this year, fiber was extended to all Cree communities
 below the La Grande. Up to now, students and patients
 have been the main beneficiaries



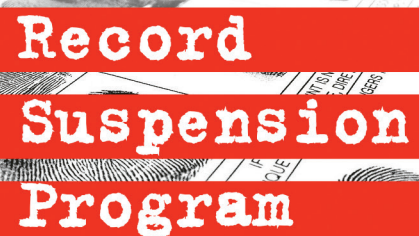
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tat. So for someone with a
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 it seems like a logical way
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 stone. But for the minister
 in charge of conservation,
 it's an irresponsible deci-
 sion."

In the end, said
 Saganash, it comes down
 to respecting the animal,
 Indigenous communities
 and the land. "If an animal
 is born in the wild, it should
 die in the wild. Putting that
 animal in an artificial set-
 ting is not a respectful way
 to treat an animal and all
 that it gives to our commu-
 nities. An acceptable con-
 servation measure would
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www.creejustice.ca



BASEMENT DREAMS

Naskapi hip-hop group **Violent Ground** is gaining turf one rap at a time

by Dan Isaac
Photos by Chris Guerrero-Silva

“Me and my boys were just chilling, having a cigarette on the balcony. When it caved in we fell about 50 feet... ***I was the only one who walked away.*** I’ve been trying to cope with that whole experience through music ever since.”

- Allan Nabiniacaboo (Lyrik)



The Naskapi rap group Violent Ground started off as a dream in a basement. The brothers who formed the group, Allan Nabiniacaboo (Lyrik) and Chris Nabinacaboo (N9ne Livez), remember hanging out at their mom's house at the Kawawachikamach First Nation (northeast of Schefferville) with their cousin, Steve Einish, listening to old-school hip-hop and talking about making a big splash in rap some day. Flash-forward 16 years and they're starting to make some waves.

Though the brothers have a 2014 debut album under their belts, the three – Allan, Chris and Einish – recent-

ly formed a Montreal-based production company called 91 Base – in honour of the aforementioned basement.

Chris is a recent graduate of Recording Arts Canada's Sound & Music Recording program, the same one Allan is currently in the process of completing. Since graduating, Chris has joined Einish, who is the group's new manager, in the Music Business Administration program at the Trebas Institute.

The intention behind forming the production company is to first record a new Violent Ground album, and then move on to producing and record-

ing Indigenous artists from all musical genres. "There's a lot of hidden talent on the reserves," said Chris. "Now that I've learned the technical side, I'm interested in creating a music business and brand."

Allan plans on studying film production once he graduates. "We want to be able to cover all the bases of the music business," he added.

But the ability to simply continue his education is a blessing as far as Allan's concerned. A freak balcony collapse in December 2015 claimed the lives of two of Allan's friends and left him in critical condition in a Montreal hospital.

www.nationnews.ca May 26, 2017 *the Nation* 21



Taapwaauchaayimiisu Believe In Yourself

OUR PROGRAM

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The expression **"Believe in yourself"** is dear to our program as we want to send a strong message of empowerment and self-worth to our youth.

OUR SERVICE SITES

Taapwaauchaayimiisu program in Mistissini has officially moved in their new service site at the Family Resource Centre (Old Youth Centre). Thank you, Cree Nation of Mistissini, for your collaboration in providing space for our youth.

We would also like to thank everyone that attended our open houses in Waskaganish and Chisasibi.

Should you require more information, please contact the coordinator.

Tel: (819) 527-0407

E-mail: Byyourself@cngov.ca



When recording the half-finished song "James Bay," Lloyd Cheechoo didn't realize that it would become his signature piece. Even more surprising is that it took nearly 40 years for it to garner mainstream recognition.

The incomplete song was recorded, essentially, on a whim and first appeared on the compilation album, *Goose Wings (The Music of James Bay)*. The sound engineer for the album Mel Stewart had space for one more song and asked Cheechoo, who had just finished recording *Winds of Change*, if he had anything else.

"I told him I had started writing a new song, and Mel said, 'Let's hear it,'" Cheechoo told *the Nation*. "I had one verse at the time so I played it for him and he liked it. He said, 'I'm going for lunch, write another verse.' So I did and he comes back from lunch and says, 'That'll do. You come with the powwow beat and I'll add the bassline.'"

And though the song was recorded in the 1970s and released in 1981, it found new life in 2014 when it was re-released on the compilation album *Native North America (Vol 1): Aboriginal Folk, Rock, and Country 1966-1985*.

Vancouver music historian and DJ Kevin "Sipreano" Howes curated the compilation that's described as "an anthology of music that was once near-extinct and largely unheard but at its core,

utterly revolutionary." In 2016, *Native North America (Vol 1)* was nominated for the Best Historical Album Grammy.

This summer Cheechoo, along with Duke Redbird, Willie Thrasher, Linda Saddleback, Willy Mitchell, and Gordon Dick Sr., will be performing at the Vancouver Folk Music Festival under the banner, *Native North America: A Gathering of Indigenous Trailblazers*.

Cheechoo, a former executive director of the Cree Native Arts & Crafts Association, has spent most of his life as a musician. But the decades when Indigenous music was being overlooked weren't easy for him or his contemporaries.

"Bittersweet is the word I'd use to describe the attention the song is getting now," said Cheechoo. "Back then all of us were hitting our heads against the wall. We knew that Native music was not 'in' yet."

Cheechoo's original band – with him on drums, brother Elmer Cheechoo on bass, cousin Vern Cheechoo on guitar and vocals and Lawrence Martin on guitar and vocals – was called Vell's Universe and has been a long-time

Eeyou Istchee favourite.

"In 2009, the second coming of Vell's Universe was invited to Wemindji for the 50th anniversary, minus Elmer who's moved on to gospel music," said Cheechoo. "We were supposed to have a 45-minute set and we ended up playing for almost two hours. They let us play for that long because we're like the Eagles, the Native Eagles, and everyone has their own album to play."

And while Cheechoo's bandmates – Lawrence Martin and Vern Cheechoo – have received several Aboriginal Music Juno nominations, the spotlight is something he's still getting used to.

"When Kevin reached out to me, he was like my saviour, not so much for Lawrence and Vern. They've reached a level where

they're rubbing elbows with the biggies," said Cheechoo. "But Vern and Laurence have said, 'This is your time to shine, we're going to be in the background.'"

Reached by phone in Vancouver, Howes expressed his gratitude for Cheechoo's contributions to the album. "I have yet to meet Lloyd in person and I'm looking forward to having him out here on unceded Coast Salish territory," said Howes. "I'm a massive fan of his work and it's really resonated with me a lot even though I'm a non-Indigenous person."

For now, Cheechoo is looking forward to his performance at the Vancouver folk fest. "James Bay wasn't a finished song when I recorded it," said Cheechoo. "When I perform it in Vancouver, they're going to hear a finished song with a few

"James Bay wasn't a finished song when I recorded it... When I perform it in Vancouver, they're going to hear a finished song with a few more verses, and I'm proud of that little song that could."

by Dan Isaac

BAND ON THE RUN

Decades later, spotlight shines on Cree artist's work



Spring Goose Hunt

A renewal of our bond with the land

by Will Nicholls

Those who aren't Cree often don't understand what the spring goose hunt means to us. For the Cree, it symbolizes the renewal of Eeyou Istchee. The hard times of winter have come to an end. We return to the land much as our ancestors have done for thousands of years. It is a celebration that brings together family and friends. Though not a holiday many non-Cree regard it as such. It is a renewal of the bond we have with the lands and creation itself.



A youngster's first goose is a milestone and a source of pride. A hunter will decide when it is time to bring the young man or woman (more and more these days) to the blind. These youngsters will be given the first shot at the geese before older, more experienced hunters take aim at the flocks overhead.

This year I was lucky enough to see two of my young cousins get their first goose. The smiles and pride were not only on their faces, but on all of ours. We know the traditions and Cree way-of-life will continue in their actions and we have all taken part in that. That is no small thing and that too is a source of pride.

Photos: Zacharius Mianscum, Age 11, Mistissini, May 1 (left); middle left to right: Aramis Miniquaken, May 2, Wemindji; Shania Matoush; Jacob Georgekish, May 11, La Sarcelle; Alyssa Mistacheesick, May 12



Under the Northern Sky Identity theft

by Xavier Kataquapit



It's not easy being a Native person in this country. My people have had extreme challenges over hundreds of years and the fact that we have managed to survive is amazing. As a Mushkego Cree from the James Bay coast, I speak my language and I also have a good understanding of my ancient culture and traditions.

Throughout my life, my heritage has been a mixed blessing. On one hand when I travel and meet Europeans and other cultures, I feel special with their reactions mostly of respect and intrigue. On the other hand, when I am home in Canada, often I have had to deal with racism, discrimination and jealousy.

In the 1990s, things seemed to change for the better in some ways and abject racism became replaced by a new respect and interest in my people. Although there was a decade-long backlash with the election of the Conservative government of Stephen Harper in 2006, for some time things have gotten better again under the Liberals. Over the years I have seen Native people attain higher education and become lawyers, politicians, educators and healthcare professionals. Native artists, performers and writers have also had success and there is great interest in Aboriginal issues and art globally.

In just the past two decades we have seen federal and provincial governments apologize to Native people for the wrongs committed since the arrival of the Europeans. There has been an attempt at a healing and compensation for so many thousands of my people affected by the residential school system, the Sixties Scoop and general oppression of Natives.

Unfortunately, even with all the words and announcements that have

been made by governments and advocates over the past few years, I have felt that much of these words have been more or less empty and that the surface has changed but the undercurrents of the same old sentiments still run deep.

Strangely, this fact rears its dirty face in the words of non-Native editors, writers and artists across Canada. Recently, I have been reminded that

the arts community has to be sensitive in terms of how it uses and abuses the right to appropriate our culture, traditions, images and stories. Is it too much to ask non-Native artists, writers and performers to think about what they are doing when they jump on the Native bandwagon?

If these creative non-Natives feel that by taking advantage of a trend in

The undercurrents of the same old sentiments **still run deep.**

many Canadians still don't take us seriously as a people and they find it just fine to take advantage of our cultural traditions, history, art and stories to enhance their own careers and make a few more bucks on our backs.

When I read the headlines regarding an editorial from the Writers Union of Canada in their quarterly magazine that advocated for more cultural appropriation in Canadian literature with no conscious thought as to what that meant for Aboriginal people in this country, I realized that much of Canada still feels this way. This may not have been such a big deal at first as it was the voice of one leader in the literary arts world, but it was immediately supported by other major non-Native figures and representatives in the arts, cultural and communications media. There are many in the Canadian arts and literary community who find that it is perfectly acceptable to take over, represent or even speak for another culture that is not their own.

Although I believe in free speech and free thinking, I think

an interest in Aboriginal music, images, culture and traditions because it is beneficial to them, then that is wrong. You all should concentrate on something else and leave us alone. Now, if you claim you are Native and in fact are not to gain a career, well, this unforgivable. So, let's hope the recent feedback and outcry about this issue makes the non-Native arts community stop in its tracks and realize stealing our stories, images, traditions and culture is no longer acceptable.

The real litmus test for me is when I see non-Natives write about or create artwork concerning my culture because it is fashionable or trendy and highly marketable. This type of opportunism for the sole purpose of making another dollar and selling their products on our backs is simply wrong.



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